



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Ehrlichiosis

What is ehrlichiosis?

Ehrlichiosis is a disease caused by germs that can infect animals and people. Ehrlichiosis has been known to sicken animals for many years, but infection of people has only been known about for the last 15-20 years.

What are the symptoms of ehrlichiosis?

Some people may not become ill or only have very mild symptoms; others may have very severe illness. Symptoms appear 5-10 days after the tick has taken a blood meal and fallen from the host. Symptoms may include fever, headache, fatigue, and muscle aches. Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, cough, joint pains, confusion, and sometimes a rash may also be present.

How is ehrlichiosis spread?

Ehrlichiosis is spread by the bite of a tick with the germ. Ticks acquire these germs by biting small, wild rodents or deer. The tick injects the germs into either the animal host or human host as it bites and fills with blood.

Who is at risk for ehrlichiosis?

Anyone who does outdoor activity where there are ticks is at risk.

How do I know if I have ehrlichiosis?

You cannot tell without seeing a doctor. Your doctor will complete a physical exam and lab testing.

How is ehrlichiosis treated?

Ehrlichiosis can be treated with antibiotics available from a doctor.

How is ehrlichiosis prevented?

Prevent tick bites:

- Walk on cleared trails and stay in the center of the trail;
- Avoid contact with leaf litter, brush, and overgrown grass;
- Wear light colored long pants with cuffs tucked into sock and long sleeves when walking in grassy or wooded areas. It is easier to spot ticks on light colored clothing.
- Put insect repellent containing DEET on cloths, socks, and shoes, and exposed skin.
- Permethrin (Permanone) will keep ticks off clothes and shoes but should not be applied to skin.
- Check every 2 hours for ticks on clothes or exposed skin.
- After outdoor activity, brush off clothing and body. Inspect clothes and body for ticks, particularly in the areas of the groin, back of neck and knees, and armpits. Take a hot shower and wash clothes in hot water.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/ehrlichiosis/>

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